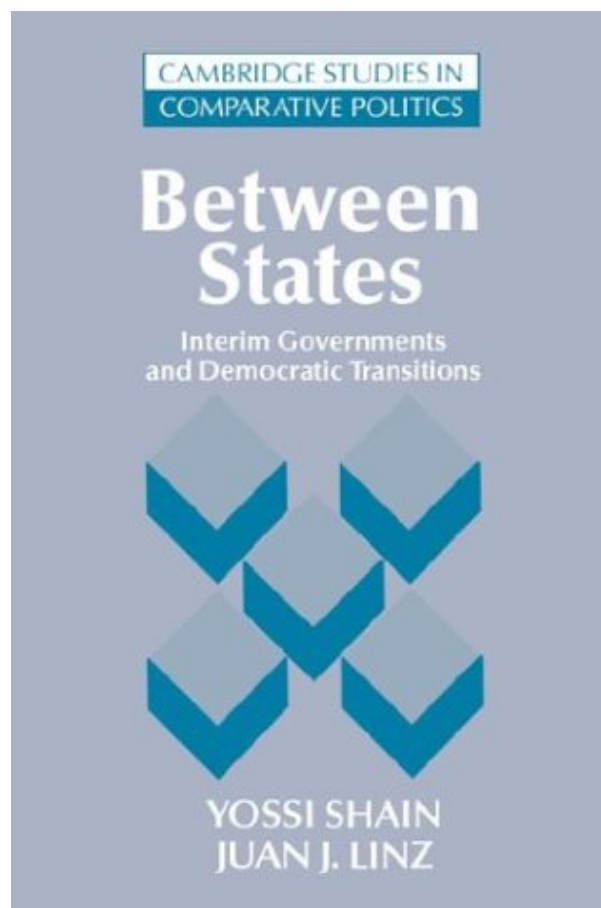


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Between States

Interim Governments
and Democratic Transitions



YOSSI SHAIN
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Review

"In this major contribution to the study of regime transition, Shain and Linz differentiate in extraordinarily suggestive ways among various types of interim government. The reader is continuously struck by the authors' breadth of knowledge and their frequent subtle insights into political life. *Between States* is a major contribution to what we know--and how we think about--the challenge of regime transition." Robert Fishman, University of Notre Dame

"This book is an important and unique contribution to the literature on democratization and, more broadly, regime change. By undertaking comparative analyses of the roles played by interim governments, Shain, Linz and their collaborators fill an important void in our knowledge of this sometimes crucial step in processes of political change." Richard Gunther, Ohio State University

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Between States is a two-part study compiled in one book. It is the first book to assess systematically the broad implications of interim governments in the establishment of democratic regimes and on the existence of states. Drawing on historical and contemporary democratization experiences, Shain and Linz, the principal authors, explore four ideal types of interim government: opposition-led provisional governments, power-sharing interim governments, incumbent-led caretaker governments, and international interim government by the United Nations. In the second part of this book, other contributors evaluate the subject further in extensive case studies.

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Useful for understanding the limitations of IR theory

By A Customer

Reviewed by Sergei V. Solodovnik in *International Relations*, Volume XIII, No 5, August 1997 -

The purpose of this book is two-fold: first, to develop a theory based on models of transitional forms of governance, and secondly, to support a theoretical analysis with case studies derived from six episodes of post-Second World War history. The authors have done their best to blend legal and political issues into an integrated multi-disciplinary approach, reflecting the twin challenges experienced by new states emerging from a former state: the legitimacy of the political entity and the nature of its regime.

Both points are crucial in those instances when the period between the break-up of the old regime or the dissolution of the former state and the first democratic elections is overseen by an interim administration. A provisional government, by definition, is not a fully legal entity, which might explain why many scholars of the legality of the state have disregarded the problems of provisional governments. But the type of government is crucial during the stage of transition from authoritarian to democratic rule; it may either impede or expedite the transformation.

The authors offer the following models of transitional regimes: 1) revolutionary provisional governments, 2) power-sharing interim governments, 3) incumbent caretaker governments, 4) international interim governments. While the first three differ between themselves on the extent of the role played by representatives of the former ruling elite within an interim government (from near zero in model 1 to near dominant in model 3), the fourth model seems especially apposite for the turn of the century, with the new emphasis on international intervention in civil or ethnic conflicts.

In that context, the authors put their model to a test of the 'lessons from Namibia and Cambodia'; both interventions proved successful. The proposition here was that the United Nations assumed 'the role of international interim government'.

It should be noted, however, that in Namibia and in Cambodia, as well as in Bosnia somewhat later, the UN's role was rather that of the international voter. The United Nations was not conducting direct rule, it concentrated on control points in the transition process, such as refugee camps, safety zones, military forces concentration points etc. It would be much closer to reality to describe the UN's role as an international ministry of defence on a power-sharing basis. It seems to me, however, that the role of international voter which the UN played was much more important for the transitional stage. It was the United Nations which decided who would be eligible for the local interim government - in terms of both political parties and individuals - and what would be the share for each domestic actor in the provisional administration. In a way, the UN was sorting the democratic, or at least rational, sheep from the dictatorial goats. In Namibia the goats succumbed; in Cambodia they were suppressed; but in Somalia they proved much stronger than the

international voter, or rather the latter failed to back the right sheep.

In the cases of multilateral intervention, such as enforced peacekeeping, the international community tends to support the idea of interim power-sharing governments, the model for which is outlined in Chapter 2. The authors state that the viability of such temporary coalitions is contingent upon the relative strength of the regime and the zealotry of the opposition, while at the same time such a partnership imparts a degree of legitimacy on both sides.

The first two case studies concern the Portuguese and Iranian revolutionary transitions. In the first case transformation led to democracy, while in the second it produced a totally new clerical legitimacy for the country. Apart from differences in their religious, ethnic and cultural traditions, the authors explain the differences in outcome by such factors as the revolutionaries' attitudes towards the existing institutions of state power, whatever the character of the ancien régime. State bureaucracy in its larger sense, including financial and legal institutions, the police and the armed forces, was upheld in Portugal and almost totally disintegrated in Iran.

The Afghan case shows the international community's total failure to establish a capable interim government. When the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan, and Russia subsequently closed down its military and resource support for the Najibullah government, President Najibullah was quite prepared to take part in an interim government. Alas, it was too late, both for President Najibullah personally and for the idea of a compromise solution in general. It seems that one of the most decisive factors was the lack of any effective foreign intervention, against which the United Nations had voted almost unanimously in the 1980s. The UN budget could not support intervention in a country so divided along ethnic, tribal, religious and local lines. Thus the implementation of the UN plan to establish an interim administration failed, and conflict resolution changed into ethnic fragmentation.

This book is extremely useful for those who understand the limitations of international relations theory, which cannot fully account for the transformation of state interests in the transition process. The internal determinants of a state's foreign policy both in the process of consolidation e.g. Germany, or dissolution e.g. USSR, may prove critical for global politics. The period of transition, however short, leaves behind long-term consequences for other international actors.

SERGEI V. SOLODOVNIK

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